

VZCZCXRO4080
RR RUEHCN RUEHGH
DE RUEHGH #0404/01 2680642
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 250642Z SEP 09
FM AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8296
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3084
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 2217
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0074
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0674
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2381
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 2208
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 2012
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0122
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 8948

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SHANGHAI 000404

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV SOCI PHUM ECON PREL OIIP KPAO CH

SUBJECT: SHANGHAI WOMEN'S FEDERATION CHAIRWOMAN ON PLENUM OUTCOMES
AND FUTURE OF NGOS

REF: A. (A) BEIJING 2731
 ¶B. (B) SHANGHAI 381
 ¶C. (C) SHANGHAI 110

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Summary

¶11. (SBU) The Chairwoman of the Shanghai Women's Federation discussed her views on the recently concluded CPC Central Committee Plenary Session and challenges facing NGOs with the Consul General on the margins of the 7th Shanghai International Forum for Children. During the forum's opening ceremony, the Consul General delivered a speech focusing on the importance of civil society and the contributions of NGOs, a message that appeared to be well-received by the more than 200 people in attendance. End Summary.

Views on the Plenum

¶12. (SBU) During a September 23 discussion with the Consul General, Madame Zhang Lili, Chairwoman of the Shanghai Women's Federation, indicated she had participated in one of the preparatory meetings where local figures had been consulted about the draft document for the annual CPC Central Committee plenary session (Ref A). (Note: Zhang is a member of the Shanghai Municipal CPC Committee.) According to Zhang, the "decision" reached at the Plenum had six main points, one of which was to "serve the public" -- an objective Zhang said is directly related to the work of the Shanghai Women's Federation.

As a "public organization under the leadership of the CPC," Zhang emphasized that the Shanghai Women's Federation "attached great importance" to its role in serving the public.

¶3. (SBU) Asked how the Party advances the prospects of women in politics, Zhang said the Shanghai Women's Federation has two primary goals: (1) to protect women when their rights are violated, and (2) to recommend women for leadership positions and involve women in the political process. Zhang said former Vice Premier Wu Yi was very supportive of promoting more women into leadership roles. Zhang agreed with the Consul General that the promotion of Wang Yanwen from Mayor to Party Secretary of Jiangsu Province's Yangzhou Municipality was significant (Ref B). She added that with more women in leadership positions, the Shanghai Women's Federation increasingly plays a role as a networking organization such as when Shanghai hosted a meeting of women mayors last year, an event which focused on Shanghai's economic development as well as personal issues such as how to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Film on PRC Founding Rewrites History for the Stars

¶4. (SBU) Zhang told the Consul General she recently saw the movie, "Foundation of a Republic" (Jianguo Daye), which was released September 17. The film tells the story of the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949 and was released just prior to the 60th anniversary. Zhang said a scene featuring Chinese movie star Zhang Ziyi where a group of women delegates disagreed with Mao Zedong about the design of the new PRC flag was not historically accurate. However, Zhang said she was happy to see what she thought was an

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accurate and "representative" depiction of Song Qingling (i.e., Mme Sun Yat-sen) and Deng Yingchao (wife of the late Premier Zhou Enlai), who Zhang said were "outstanding women who made a huge impact."

The Growing Importance of NGOs

¶5. (SBU) Zhang observed that NGOs and social organizations are "developing rapidly" in Shanghai. (Comment: Nearly all of the speakers during the forum's opening ceremony highlighted the contributions of NGOs to women's and children's issues. End Comment.) As a "United Front" organization, the Shanghai Women's Federation, like other Government-organized NGOs (GONGOs), is a large-scale organization with some influence on the government. The Women's Federation "helps the CPC solve problems," Zhang said, and in return, the Women's Federation receives funding from the Central Government.

¶6. (SBU) Asked to explain the situation of NGOs in China, Zhang said that the government is "supportive" of new NGOs and social organizations that are not affiliated with the government. The Shanghai Women's Federation, for example, is an umbrella organization for several other social organizations such as the Women's Lawyers Association, Women's Engineers Association, and Women's Doctors Association. All associations should have written charters, a leadership structure, and register with the Bureau of Civil Affairs, Zhang said.

Increasing International Cooperation

¶ 17. (SBU) The Shanghai Women's Federation would like to establish more partnerships with international organizations, Zhang said, but she acknowledged the challenges of registering foreign NGOs in China. The Shanghai Women's Federation cooperates with several international NGOs, including the YWCA and Save the Children, Zhang said. Zhang acknowledged that forcing NGOs to find a government partner can skew their work; for example, while the YWCA is partnered with the Women's Federation, the YMCA currently is partnered with the Communist Youth League (CYL). According to Zhang, the Shanghai 2010 World Expo will give the Shanghai Women's Federation and other United Front organizations (including the Shanghai Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)) more opportunities to reach out to international partners for exchanges.

Opening Ceremony Focuses on NGOs

¶ 18. (SBU) During the forum's opening ceremony, the Consul General delivered a speech focusing on the importance of civil society and the contributions of NGOs, a message that appeared to be well-received by the more than 200 people in attendance. Other speakers, including a representative from Save the Children, also called for more opportunities for NGOs to serve women and children in China. Shanghai Vice Mayor Zhao Wen said helping children is "the responsibility of government, society, and people," and the Shanghai Municipal Government "wants to promote international cooperation on children's issues."

Bio Notes

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¶ 19. (SBU) Zhang Lili, Chairwoman of the Shanghai Women's Federation, is 56-years-old and is a native of Shanghai. She joined the CPC in August 1973. Zhang graduated from Shanghai Second Polytechnic University, majoring in industrial engineering and engineering management and holds a master's degree in engineering from Shanghai Jiaotong University. During the Cultural Revolution, Zhang worked as a farmer, teacher and government administrative officer in Yunnan Province. In May 1979, Zhang returned to Shanghai and worked as editor and announcer of a radio station. She worked her way up through CPC posts in Changning District and was named Deputy Party Secretary of the district's CPC Committee in 1998. She moved laterally to Zhabei District in 2003 and was named Chairwoman of the Shanghai Women's Federation in February 2007.

¶ 10. (SBU) Vice Mayor Zhao Wen is the only woman and the only one of Shanghai Municipality's eight vice mayors who is not a member of the Communist Party. (Zhao heads the Shanghai branch of the September 3 Society, one of the eight "democratic parties" affiliated with the CPC.) Vice Mayor Zhao's portfolio includes sports, tourism, intellectual property rights, family planning, culture, and women's and children's issues. A native of Anqing in Anhui Province, Zhao's career began as a professor in the Tongji University School of Economics and Management. She first entered the political sphere as a Vice Governor of Nanhai District and later moved to the Municipal People's Congress

Finance Bureau. Zhao was named Vice Mayor of Shanghai
Municipality in January 2008.
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